CM agree on mine-revival strategy appearing in the 'Statesmen' dated 6th November, 2001;

(b) whether Central and State Governments are jointly working out a strategy to make the loss-making mines of ECL viable; and

(c) if so, the outline of the strategy to make the loss-making mines in Eastern Coalfields viable?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL AND MINES (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Coal India Limited engaged Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) in 1997 to prepare a restructuring-cum revival plan for Eastern Coalfields Ltd. The ICICI submitted their final report in January, 2000. Controller General of Accounts (CGA) had expressed reservations about certain observations of ICICI. CGA instead suggested an alternative plan. After a through review, ECL management has drawn up a plan for survival and eventual revival of the company. The broad outline of the proposal is as under:—

(i) No worker will be terminated but if the workers come forward for Voluntary Retirement Scheme, it will be considered.

(ii) The manpower and machines will be re-deployed in such a way that optimal utilisation of men and machines is achieved. In the process, work in some mines may be discontinued.

(iii) Instead of outright purchase of Heavy Earth Moving Machinery (HEMM), these would be taken on lease to work some opencast mines.

(iv) Financial support by CIL/Govt. for meeting liabilities for payment of arrear wages and debt servicing.

(v) Further relief by reduction of cess by the Govt. of West Bengal to the level of royalty in other States.

(vi) Closure of some mines of ECL which have become commercially unviable.

Non-Granting of Mining Lease by State Governments

1677. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of COAL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that State Governments are not granting mining lease and prospecting licences and number of applications are pending for approval;

(b) if so, the number of applications pending till date with different States;

(c) the number of applications cleared and permission granted during last two years; and

(d) the steps taken by the Union Government to speed up process for disposing applications by State Governments?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL AND MINES (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) to (d) under Section 10(3) of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 reconnaissance Permits, Prospecting Licences and Mining leases are granted by the State Government concerned. Proposals for prior approval of the Central Government for grant of mineral concessions for minerals specified under the First Schedule to the aforesaid Act originate from the respective State Governments and are processed and disposed of by the Central Government as per provisions of law. Since the grant of Mining leases and prospecting Licences is under the domain of the State Governments, therefore, the information regarding details of applications pending, cleared and permission granted by the State Governments is not centrally maintained. The existing scheme of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 and rules made thereunder provide early disposal of mineral concession applications by the State Governments in the interest of mineral development.

However, from time to time the Central Government has been sensitising the State Governments for early disposal of mineral concessions. The necessity for such early disposal of mineral concessions have been discussed and recommended by the Mineral Advisory Council in its meeting held on 30.8.2000, the Conference of State Ministers of Mining and Geology held on 14.7.2001 and in the Tripartite meeting of the Central Government, State Governments and Investors held on 12.11.2001.

Setting up of Defence Procurement Board in Ministry of Defence

1678. PROF. (SHRIMATI) BHARATI RAY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Procurement Board has been set up in Defence Ministry of arrange procurement for all the three Services;